

Northern Region's scholars go on to college life

The 2004 DCFS Scholarship recipients are adjusting to campus life and all the academic challenges that come along. Fortunately, they have more than a little help. The scholarship covers tuition and academic costs at any of the nine participating Illinois state institutions, and provide a monthly stipend of \$445 and a medical card for up to four years. These students, whose cases are handled in Northern Region, were selected from among more than 250 applicants. Their high school achievements and personal resilience will surely help them as they go forward in this new stage. They also can take with them the pride and good wishes of the caregivers and professionals who continue to offer support and encouragement.



Alice Helmick

Alice Helmick, of Hebron, is a 2004 graduate of Alden Hebron High School. She now is a student at Western Illinois University, where she plans to major in sports management. In high school, Alice participated in basketball, track, volleyball, and student government. She was an honor roll student and earned many awards for her volunteer work with several organizations including serving as a mentor for children at a homeless shelter and teaching racial tolerance at elementary schools. Alice also worked at Subway for two years.



Sandra Hill

Sandra Hill, a resident of Rockford, graduated from Rockford East High School in 2004. She now attends Western Illinois University, majoring in early childhood education. Her eventual goal is to be a teacher. While in high school, she participated in POMS, fund raising activities, and the Orchestra. She earned all-city honors in Orchestra for three years. For four summers, Sandra volunteered as an apprentice counselor at the YMCA's Camp Winnebago working with 6-12 year old children. She has also volunteered for a variety of church associated food drives and fund raising projects.



Natalie Luna

Natalie Luna of Richmond graduated in 2004 from Richmond-Burton Community High School where she was an honor roll student. Now she is a student at McHenry County Community College. She plans to study elementary education. In high school, Natalie was the recipient of the "All Conference Scholar Athlete Award" and was selected for the "USAA National Honor Student Award." She was a member of Environmental Club, served as a senior mentor and peer mediator. Natalie participated in soccer and softball. She also worked at the Main Street Café and volunteers at her church.



Kortney McKee

Kortney McKee of Morris is a 2004 graduate of Morris Community High School. Kortney is now a student at Northern Illinois University majoring in english education/secondary education. In high school, Kortney earned a 4.75 GPA and was on the High Honor Roll. She participated on the Drama Club, Speech Team, Science Club, German Club, French Club, and Spanish Club. Her employment history includes jobs at Jewel-Osco and Quizno's. She has volunteered at her high school cafeteria and at swim meets.

Scholarship recipients, con't.

Amanda McKenney

Amanda McKenney of Elburn is a 2003 graduate of Harvard High School. She attends Waubensee Community College and plans to major in fine arts. In high school, Amanda was an honor roll student. She also participated in Cheerleading and the Art Club. She is an extremely talented writer and artist and was nominated by her Art Teacher for the USAA National Arts Award. Amanda was previously employed by Bill's Pool and Spa and has worked at Subway. She has also volunteered for several DCFS Christmas parties.



Erica Patterson

Erica Patterson of Elgin is a 2004 graduate of Westminster Christian School. Now she attends Elgin Community College. She plans to major in secondary education and become a teacher. In high school, she participated in Soccer, Future Teacher's Club, Volleyball and Cheerleading. She was also Student Body Vice President. Her extensive volunteer activities include babysitting for church and needy families, working on city beautification projects, and working at the Lazarus House, a homeless shelter. For the past two years Erica has worked at the Colonial Café. Erica is a talented writer, public speaker, and actress.



Roger Smith-Bergsrud

Roger Smith-Bergsrud of Lake Bluff graduated from Lake Forest High School in 2004. He is now studying at the University of Illinois. In high school, Roger was an honor student and participated in football and wrestling. He earned All Conference honors three years in football. He is one of the top wrestlers in the history of Lake Forest High School. Roger placed 3rd in the IHSA State Wrestling Tournament in both 2003 and 2004. He has worked as a caddie at Knollwood Golf Course and as a custodian at his church. He has also volunteered for Habitat for Humanity.

Nicole Surf

Nicole Surf of Zion is a 2004 graduate of Zion-Benton Township High School. She now attends the University of Illinois at Chicago. Her career goal is to be a neurosurgeon. In high school, Nicole was a High Honor Roll student and participated in Thespians and Band. She volunteers at her church in the nursery and at youth group events. She worked both at Limited Too and Joe's Crab Shack.



Karen Thingvold

Karen Thingvold of Rockford is a 2004 graduate of Rockford East High School. She now attends Northern Illinois University in DeKalb. Karen has already completed her Certified Nursing Assistant requirements and plans to pursue a career as an optometrist. In high school, she is a member of the National Honor Society and the National Honor Society for Spanish. Karen has also completed two years of sign language school. In addition to volunteering at her church, she has worked at MCI, Culver's, and Country Kitchen.



Hansen Voss

Hansen Voss of Union graduated in 2004 from Marengo Community High School. He is now studying at Southern Illinois University, majoring in music. His career goal is to be a Music Teacher. Hanson is an excellent musician and plays the guitar, bass guitar, and trumpet. In high school, he participated in Thespians, Concert Band, Jazz Band, and Wind Ensemble. He has volunteered at Youth Band Camps and as a Teacher's Aide at school. His work history includes jobs at Rosati's, O'Donelle Plumbing, and Mike Murphy's Metal & More.

Midwest Adoption Conference in Palatine

Adoptive and foster families living in the northern area of the state may be interested in attending the 11th Midwest Adoption Conference, "The Adoption Experience". The annual conference is presented by Adoptive Families Today, Families with Children of China, and Stars of David. Caregivers, birth parents, professionals and prospective adoptive families are invited to the conference on Sunday, November 7 starting at 8:30 a.m. until 5:30 p.m. Harper College will host the event, located at 1200 W. Algonquin Road.

The keynote speaker is Deborah Gray, a therapist and author of the book *Attaching in Adoption: Practical Tools for Today's Parents*. There will be several breakout sessions where attendees can choose from more than 40 topics. Many agencies and organizations will also have exhibits during the conference.

This conference can be used for up to 7.5 training hours for license renewal. Registration fees range from \$75 for individual members of one of the presenting organizations to \$160 for non-member couples. For more information, call adoptive Families Today at 847-382-0858 or go to one of the organizations' web sites: www.adoptivefamilies.org, www.fcchicago.org, or www.starsofdavid.org.

DCFS Operations Exec explains local cuts with other supports in place

To our foster parents in the Northern Region:

The Illinois Legislature reduced the DCFS annual budget by \$77 million recently. All levels within our agency were asked to work smarter and more focused at the "essentials only" level of delivery. This resulted in cuts in some contracts. Since our population of children in care has fallen below 19,000 we have realigned our energies and resources to focus on quality instead of quantity. One difficult, but necessary, cut was to reduce the level of Foster Parent Support Specialists. These individuals work with families in DCFS-supervised foster homes.

The foster parent support specialist role will continue in the regions. Coverage is being realigned and some activities are being eliminated or shifted to other areas of the department. These changes will allow the remaining foster parent support specialists to focus on homes in which our children and youth are placed.

If you have questions about these changes or are unsure who your assigned foster parent support specialist is please call Deb Freke (630-790-6817) or Grace Hanley (815-967-3729), the Lead Support Specialists in your region.

Many other support programs for foster parents remain in place.

DCFS will continue with the Foster Parent training modules required for re-licensing and available to new licensing applicants for skill building. New course offerings are underway (see article on page 8). Caregivers can also participate in the regional advisory councils and the State-wide Foster Care Advisory Council. Additionally, the information shared in this periodical serves to inform caregivers of significant events, program changes and resource information. Finally, caregivers will of course continue to receive active support from the caseworkers assigned to the children in their homes. If you are experiencing problems that are not being addressed by your caseworker please contact the supervisor or manager for assistance.

Although fostering children will continue to challenge many homes and communities, DCFS will continue to provide supports to both. In the year ahead, we are committed to providing even more developmental services to foster homes throughout the state. We highly value our caregivers and will not lose sight of your immeasurable contribution to the children and families we all serve.

Sincerely,

Arthur Bishop
DCFS Deputy Director for Operations

New trainings coming on asthma, sexual behavior problems and policy updates

The schedules for in-service training had to be put on hold due to the state budget delays. However, the Office of Training stayed busy developing new offerings for caregivers. Look for updated schedules in the next issue of the newsletter or contact the DCFS training college.

Asthma training

This new foster parent in-service training on caring for children with Asthma is based on training initially developed by the Office of the Inspector General for child welfare staff. Asthma is a chronic disease that affects many children and requires environmental and medical management by caregivers. It is the most common chronic illness in children, the leading cause of school absenteeism and is the third leading cause of hospitalization in children under age 15. It is estimated that between 12% and 25% of wards have Asthma. The two and one-half hour in-service training will address the implications of caring for children with Asthma.

Understanding and Working with Children with Sexual Behavior Problems

This two-day training which was developed at the request of caregivers will be provided in a team setting and introduce sweeping

new changes in philosophy, policy and service delivery when supporting children with sexual behavior problems. Review and feedback of the curriculum by foster parents and the High End SBP Committee has already been completed. Plans for additional review of the curriculum are being made. A pilot training may be scheduled for this winter.

Updated information from DCFS

The new in-service training module will focus on keeping caregivers informed of new programs, initiatives and changes to DCFS Rule and Procedure. The module will be updated frequently. The classroom time required to complete this module has not been determined yet. This training was piloted at the DCFS Cook North region earlier this year. The content includes:

- Identifying how foster parents support achieving desired outcomes for children in their care
- Applying specific behaviors and actions that are included in the PRIDE competencies toward achieving permanency
- Introducing the Illinois Model of Integrated Assessment and the changes it brings to child welfare practice
- Connecting the results of the Integrated Assessment to the

process for developing a comprehensive Family Service Plan

- Identifying changes in child welfare practice associated with the Client Service Planning Process

For more information on courses or scheduling, contact the Training Coordinator listed below:

- **Aurora Area**
630-942-2392
- **Rockford Area**
815-921-2301, ext. 2305

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Call with foster parent association news and schedules; local training; features on foster families and community members working for children; photos; and news articles and support all foster families can use.